



Monroe County Legislature

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No. <u>08-0050</u>
Not to be removed from the Office of the Legislature Of Monroe County
Committee Assignment
Memorializing Referral -L

February 1, 2008

To the Honorable
Monroe County Legislature
407 County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614

**Re: Memorializing the New York State Thruway Authority to Suspend
Projected Toll Increases**

Honorable Legislators:

Since 1950, motorists have been traveling the 641 miles of New York State Thruway. Over a fifty-year period, motorists only experienced five toll increases. Now, the Thruway Authority expects motorists to accept five increases over a five-year period. While the first of these new increases took effect in 2005, motorists saw the most recent spike on January 5, 2008. Now the Thruway Authority plans on three more increases from July 2008 to January 2010.

Travelers on the New York State Thruway are now paying for the maintenance and improvement of the roadway through both the federal gas tax and tolls. While the ten percent increase on January 5, 2008 may seem small to some, it will have a much broader impact on the community and is expected to bring in \$80 million annual profit for the Thruway Authority. State Senator Dale Volker believes this increase will devastate efforts to rejuvenate the Upstate and Western New York region. Inevitably, small business owners, farmers and truckers will suffer from continued hikes.


On January 27, 2008, State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli issued a statement rejecting the justification of toll increases. After conducting an audit of the Thruway Authority, Comptroller DiNapoli has concluded that upcoming toll hikes will not be warranted until there is a thorough examination of its expenses, operations and capital projects. In fact, it may be determined that toll increases would not be necessary with the proper fiscal management.

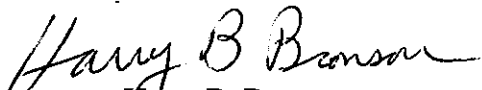



In his audit report, Comptroller DiNapoli specifically cites underestimated federal funding, lack of aggressive cost-reduction measures, uncollected E-ZPass tolls, and the inclusion of the canal system in the budget as reasons for the Authority's questionable financial condition. It was Buffalo Congressman Brian Higgins who questioned the credibility of the Thruway Authority and led the crusade for an audit. Congressman Higgins expects the audit to be used for extensive reforms in the Thruway Authority. Governor Spitzer has also publicly denounced increases in tolls and supports the Comptroller's conclusion that the Thruway Authority needs to review its spending practices before placing an additional cost burden on the public.

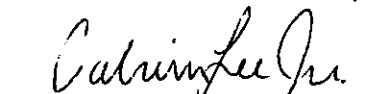
We believe, prior to the consideration of further toll increases, the Thruway Authority should review its expenses, initiate more responsible spending practices and implement cost-reduction measures. The proposed toll increases, which may be completely unnecessary, will undoubtedly have a negative economic impact on area residents and local businesses, detracting from area economic development efforts. Therefore, we encourage you to join us in memorializing the New York State Thruway Authority to suspend the proposed toll increases.


Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia Kaleh
Legislator - District 28



Harry B. Bronson
Democratic Minority Leader

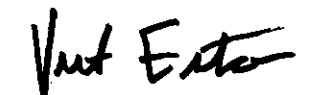

Carrie M. Andrews
Assistant Minority Leader



Calvin Lee, Jr.
Assistant Minority Leader



Richard A. Beebe
Legislator - District 6

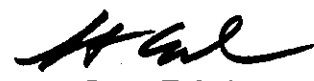

Carmen F. Gumina
Legislator - District 8



Travis R. Heider
Legislator - District 14



Vincent Esposito
Legislator - District 16


Ted O'Brien
Legislator - District 17


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